

PEOPLE & THINGS

THE State opening of Parliament is one of the noblest of English spectacles. The flash of scarlet and the gleam of old wood, tabards and tiaras in the forenoon light—all combine with the splendours of ritual to present a sight which can never be forgotten by those privileged to witness it.

The peerage has, however, grown in numbers; and the problem of space in the House of Lords has grown with it. The State opening of Parliament is the one occasion in the year on which peers can accompany their husbands into the Chamber itself, and there is not nearly enough room for all those who might wish to be present.

I should have thought that the present ballot for seats could be improved upon. Balloting sounds equitable enough, but in practice it may work out unfairly. One peeress may be unlucky for several years in succession, whereas another may be more fortunate. It could even happen that the wife of a newly created peer—and peerages are rarely conferred in early life—would never have the opportunity of seeing this impressive ceremony.

Would it not, in the circumstances, be fairer if those who are successful in one year were excluded from the ballot during the following year? Or, indeed, if the odds have been correctly computed, for several years, if all are to have a fair turn.

A Strange Conflict

I HEAR that the champions have been mounted in the lists for the forthcoming action in the Court of Chivalry between Manchester Corporation and the Manchester Theatre of Varieties in respect of the theatre's unauthorised use of the city arms.

The city's choice, an excellent one, is Mr. G. D. Squibb, who is an authority on the law of arms in England—and one, moreover, who has for some time been engaged in preparing a study of the Court of Chivalry which is eagerly awaited in heraldic and antiquarian circles.

His opponent is Mr. A. Collin Cole, Fitzalan Pursuivant Extraordinary. I shall watch with interest to see what show he makes as *advocatus diaboli*. The action is a friendly one, and I do not imagine that the plaintiffs would wish the ancient penalties (a heavy fine, or imprisonment in the Marshalsea) to apply. Amateurs of the picturesque may regret that the trial is not to be by battle, with the Lord Mayor of Manchester and the chairman of the theatre, each armed capable, charging at each other in the forefront of the College of Arms with carefully-blunted swords and lances. Not since the Eglington Tournament of 1639 would so stirring a scene have been mounted in this country.

An Anti-Traditionalist

TRADITION dies hard, and it is still difficult for many people to think of a great violinist as other than long-haired, tapering-fingered and temperamental. There was nothing of all this, however, about Mr. Jascha Heifetz as he took his place with Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at rehearsal in the Royal Festival Hall last Thursday morning.

Mr. Heifetz is of medium height, neat (glace) shoes, self-effacing necktie and close-cropped as the infield at Lord's. His redoubtable fingers are square; his stance, in conversation, composed and watchful. He talks freely, but prefers, in

By ATTICUS

cricketing parlance, the leg-glide to the shoulder-drive through the covers. At rehearsal he gives exacting but courteous attention to orchestral detail, confers with the conductor as prince with prince, and is not above giving a hand with the tuttis. There is deep feeling somewhere behind his



features, but in ordinary human relations he is precise, considerate and sparing of time.

Unlike many great executants he has a taste for English music (he commissioned Sir William Walton's violin concerto and has played Mr. Howard Ferguson's sonata); and indeed the only reproachful words I have heard him utter in respect of this country were concerned with our failure to commemorate English music on our stamps. Mr. Heifetz collects stamps of a particular kind—those that bear the heads of famous musicians; most countries have had something of this sort to offer; and our extreme conservatism in the matter is something he regards with friendly bemusement. "Not even Elgar!" he said to me. . . .

An Apt Environment

MR. GRAHAM GREENE is a welcome recruit to English theatrical life. But I always felt that there was something incongruous in the fact that his first play was presented in London at Wyndham's, a theatre whose stately comfort and Edwardian name are out of key with his Muse—so sad is she, so seedy, and so unvaryingly up to date.

Things are different in Vienna, where an adaptation of "The End of the Affair" is now being presented not in a theatre at all, but in, strange to say, a living room; the dilapidated salon, to be precise, of the Esterhazy Palace, where there now flourishes a brave little "neighbourhood theatre."

A friend lately returned from the memorable scene informs me that the adaptation, though primitive in the extreme, is followed with attention by an audience of professors, grannies, night-watchmen and very small boys. Only occasionally does the sound of deepened breathing indicate that some veteran of the *avant-garde* has exchanged Mr. Greene's grim dreamland for one of his own devising; more common, I hear, is the excited interest which is reflected in the sales (over 100,000 in more than one case) of German translations of Mr. Greene's works.

Mask and Fin

THE novelty of underwater hunting and exploring is beginning to wear off, and books on the subject will soon have to contain more than attractive coloured photographs and the explosion of various myths about shark and octopus. But, as a sport swim-

ming under water is certain to gain ground in such clear waters as can be found round the coasts of Britain, and I am glad that the British Sub-Aqua Club has got itself properly organised, and with a blessing from the Admiralty, before we make the mistakes that have practically denuded parts of the Mediterranean of fish, have necessitated Fishery Protection Laws being applied on the Pacific Coast of America and around the Florida Keys and have caused Capetown newspapers to describe spear-fishermen as hoodlums and butchers.

Full Fathom Infinity

THE first number of "Neptune," the journal of the club (16, Beverley Gardens, London, S.W.13), comes out firmly against spear-fishing, while agreeing that it is a phase through which most people pass before the beauty of fish in their natural and unsuspecting state turns the swimmer to photography or exploration.

The "Neptune" Diarist is also against "fatuous attempts to establish free-diving records," the latest of which was by a Florida lawyer who went down a marked line to 400 feet, then 450 feet, then 500, then disappeared forever. A Swedish engineer reached an estimated 480 feet and was brought up dead, and the previous record of 396 feet, set up by a Frenchman, was also established by a man who came dead to the surface.

All in all, to an occasional reader of the hysterical goings-on in the American "The Skin Diver," the authoritative common sense of "Neptune" is a great relief.

"Rugger Behind the Curtain"

I HAD heard in the past of Rugby football in Rumania (Rumanian patriots claim, in fact, that they once beat Swansea) but I had assumed that, with the advent of Communism, rugger had died a bourgeois death.

I was wrong. The Czech newspaper, "Svobodne Slovo," of October 29, gives a lurid account of a rugger match played at Bucharest on October 28 between the champion clubs of Rumania and Czechoslovakia.

The game, played before 15,000 spectators, ended in a draw, eight-eight; but the Czechs were leading eight-nil until twenty minutes before the end. At this point, the Czech newspaper states, the referee sent the Czech star performer off the field for "an imaginary foul," and from the free kick the Rumanians kicked a penalty goal.

When the whistle blew, the report continues, the score was eight-three in favour of the Czechs. "Referee Stefescu, however, prolonged the game by ten minutes until the Rumanians scored a try which was converted."

It must have been an exciting afternoon.

— Walked Here

"THE QUEEN MOTHER WALKED ON THIS CARPET! SEE IT HERE!" Window display in a store on the Avenue of the Americas, New York.